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Amityville, July 5th 1901

To my friend.

Harold H. Hall,

The East of the Communes

Robert M. Arthur.

1731

1732

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LINES



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*"Summum Bonum" and "Silence" are reprinted by permission
of The Atlantic Monthly; and "Duty" of Ainslee's
Magazine.*

PREFATORY.

These words I write as one that through a wood
Takes his enforced way to goals unknown,
And, as he struggles onward rood by rood,
Leaves signs whereby his labored path is shown ;
So that if chance should lead his steps astray,
And the compulsion of his soul be lost,
His lighted path may on some future day
Be by his erring feet again recrossed ;
And being then upon a charted ground
May look about him and begin anew,
Either avoiding what too hard was found,
Or joying what before he labored through.
 So these are landmarks of my struggling soul
 That moves through doubt to its victorious goal.

MAN.

He marks his shadow in the sun,
His form is fair, his dream is proud;
But shadow, form and dream are one
And vanish like an empty cloud.

The graven cliffs have crumbled down,
The temples worn to drifting sand;
His deeds with fame he could not crown
With all the cunning of his hand.

The idle and forgetful air
Has heard his boast, has borne his woe;
The night has seen his cities flare
And holds no gleam their place to show.

Within this crystal sphere of light,
Where soaring constellations flame,
He has no skill his deeds to write
And has no art to show his fame.

On things of Time alone can man
For years of Time record his pride;
On nothing of eternal span
Will aught that he has sealed abide.

AUTOCHTHON.

Hurled back, defeated, like a child I sought
The loving shelter of my native fields,
Where fancy still her magic scepter wields,
And still the miracles of youth are wrought.
'Twas here that first my eager spirit caught
The rapture that relentless conflict yields,
And, scorning peace and the content that shields,
Took life's wild way, unguarded and untaught.
Dear Mother Nature, not in vain we ask
Of thee for strength! The visioned victories
Revive my heart, and golden honors gleam:
For here, once more, while in thy love I bask,
My soul puts forth her rapid argosies
To the uncharted ports of summer dream.

FAITH.

Born of Thy will, it is from Thee I spring,
And naught is in me save what Thou dost give—
The light to see Thee and the strength to cling:
I am Thy vision, and in Thee I live.
To Thee I am not, yet I may become;
Evolve from phantom to a living soul;
Draw from Thy wisdom till, no longer dumb,
I rise through prayer to my immortal goal.
Springing from Thee, to Thee I shall return
And share the heritage Thou shalt provide,
With eye undimmed, Thy loving grace discern
And unreprieved in Thy peace abide.

But while Thy mysteries enmesh me round,
Faith is the refuge that my soul has found.

LIFE.

Dear God, I thank Thee for this resting place,
This fleshly temple where my soul may dwell,
And, like an anchorite within his cell,
Learn all Thy love and grow to perfect grace.
Yet, while the veil still hides me from Thy face,
Give me the light to know that all is well,
With guiding truth my erring fears dispel,
Be Thou the rock on which my faith I base.
Thy guest, not captive, to my visioned goal
I soar beyond the memory of strife,
Upborn and shielded by Thy power benign:
Thou art the strength of my unfaltering soul,
And from the vantage of this mortal life
The freedom of the infinite is mine.

DE PROFUNDIS.

Not yet are deeds fruition of my thought,
Nor is this body symbol of my soul,
For evil ever in this life is wrought
That shuns the will and its divine control.
Surely I shall not be forever weak,
Halting and stumbling on the chosen way,
Blinded by the pure and perfect light I seek
Upon the threshold of eternal day.
I do not mourn discredit to my fame
Who smile at Time and his confining shores;
'Tis this provokes the burning blush of shame:
The flesh still grovels though the spirit soars—
 But my heart's anguish who can understand,
 Or stay my folly with a guiding hand?

RETICENCE.

We may not babble unto alien ears
The truth revealed, nor show to heedless eyes
The visioned beauty, lest with shame and tears
We mourn our folly—and with futile sighs.
For words are weak, and every form of sense
Wherewith in Time we tell our hopes and needs.
To do aright is to have recompense,
And highest thought is ever told in deeds ;
And He, upon whose mighty arm we lean,
Is silent, save in works of love and power—
Most Merciful, enthroned in the Unseen,
He tries yet shields us in our mortal hour.

So faint not thou, for He who gave the will
The strength will give, and will Himself fulfill.

DUTY.

If "Yea" and "Nay" were words enough for Him
Who taught beyond the lessons of all teaching
With works nor Time nor Envy can bedim,
How vain the burden of our foolish preaching?
We but betray the spirit's citadel,
And waste on idle air the strength conferred,
When life's high message we essay to tell
In aught so faithless as an uttered word.
Deeds are the right and only alphabet
Wherewith to teach what all the world should know;
But still the tongue will evermore forget,
And strive with sounds the perfect truth to show.
Yet ever onward we must bravely press
Till love through life reveals its loveliness.

SHAKESPEARE.

I may not tell what hidden springs I find
Of living beauty in this deathless page,
Lest the dull world, that chooses to be blind,
Mock me to shame or lash me in its rage.
Alas for me that am a thing of dreams
Without the skill to show where others shine—
Because I hold their truth a thing that seems
While worse than seeming seems all truth of mine.
And yet let others on his music dote,
Or burnish every line with housewife care,
With glutton learning get his words by rote
And fail to find the spirit prisoned there!
For while I read, as thrilled by fire I start
To feel the pulsing of the poet's heart.

DREAMS.

If every thought shall weigh in the award,
And every dream as if fulfilled shall stand,
Who may complain or deem the justice hard
That heaven shall deal when his account is scanned?
The dreams I shattered when with mortal power
I strove to give them form and worthy act
Shall weigh against me in that searching hour
For all their promise in fulfilment lacked;
But if upon the other scale shall lie
The pure, resplendent raptures of my youth,
Of deeds pre-visioned, born of purpose high,
Undimmed by earth and lit by living truth,
Aspiring dreams shall gloss what ill befel,
For he whose thoughts are pure hath builded well.

COURAGE.

The dead are buried facing to the sun,
In English epitaphs their faith is told,
And yet they die without a victory won,
Leaving a world in folly growing old.
Now why should we among these futile graves
Proclaim the truth to dead or living dust,
Bow to the earth like overburdened slaves?—
Re-born the freemen of a higher trust!
Have words a substance whereon light may shine?
Can beauty glow upon a trembling sound?
Can aught but deeds foreshadow the divine?
Or save in symbols can the truth be found?
Let no weak doubt defeat your eager hand;
For all must heed though few may understand.

ASPIRATION.

How should I be the master of my ways
When every nerve is vibrant to the sweep
Of dreams that fill the measure of my days—
Too rare to lose and past all power to keep.
How should I know what it were well to do
When every path has its alluring strain,
Each towering crest its world-revealing view
Of realms for him that has the will to reign;
And while I waver, lo! this earthly shard,
Wherein is breathed the swift compelling fire,
Breaks with the ardor it was shaped to guard.
Yet, ever striving, humbly I aspire
 Ere all be spent, with reverent hands to light
 A guiding star on some hope-kindling height.

CONSECRATION.

It is no bondage to be free to give
Our all to Him who first so freely gave,
That in His living we may ever live;
For, losing all, the all we lose we save.
It is not folly to become so wise
That earthly wisdom shall be known a snare,
Nor are they blind who have the light to rise
Where science stumbles in its dark despair.
The seed corrupted in the humid soil
Sends yet its flower to the bewildering sun;
Strong without will and perfect without toil,
Helpless yet doing all that may be done.
So we, through God, though doing naught, do all,
Nor grope in darkness, nor in weakness fall.

QUESTIONINGS.

Laughter and Silence for a sword and shield !
O aching heart, what war is this you wage?
What part have you upon this furious field
Where mailed pride and reckless folly rage?
Though skilled your fencing in the mimic strife,
What is its triumph but a shallow grace?
What can it stead you in the lists of life
Where Envy levels at a smiling face?
Is there no answer? Then, if Hope abide,
Let still your shield be guard to Peace or Pain;
Kept virgin from the blazonry of pride—
Free from heraldic boast or earthly stain—
And haply when this shadowed coil is done
It's field will mirror the victorious sun.

SUMMUM BONUM.

How blest is he that can but love and do
And has no skill of speech nor trick of art
Wherewith to tell what faith approveth true
And show for fame the treasures of his heart.
When wisely weak upon the path of duty
Divine accord hath made his footing sure
With humble deeds he builds his life to beauty,
Strong to achieve and patient to endure.
But they that in the market place we meet,
Each with his trumpet and his noisy faction,
Are leaky vessels, pouring on the street
The truth they know ere it hath known its action.
Yet which think ye, in His benign regard,
Or words or deeds shall merit the reward?

SILENCE.

When friends forsake and fortune in despite
Of Thy rich bounty strips me to the wind,
With eye undimmed I mark their faithless flight
Because in Thee a refuge still I find.
To them Thy love I may not tell nor teach
Lest the, bemock not me, but Thee through me;
What Thou dost give I may not give to speech
Because in deeds my speech must ever be.
O let me live so that my life will show
That I have treasure that they know not of,
So if through envy they would seek to know
And rob my secret they will learn Thy love:
For thus the glory will be ever Thine
And the reward of faithful service mine.

THE TRUE EVANGEL.

Because that men were deaf, and man to man
I could not speak, but inarticulate
Still felt the burden and the urge of fate,
The strong compulsion of the perfect plan,
From shrine to shrine with eager steps I ran
Hearkening to every tumult of debate
Until my weary soul was desolate.
Then turned I to the fields where life began;
And lo! the evangel of the seed has taught
That not through man to God can any rise;
Alone and trusting he must lift his eyes
Until the light of living truth be caught,
And then will deeds with love and patience fraught
Through God to man reveal life's high emprise.

GROWTH.

The dumb earth yearns for the expressive seed,
The fruit fulfilled gives ear to her desire
And she but conscious of her bitter need,
In vernal beauty doth again aspire.
The fruit perfected wooes the seeing eye,
The eye demands it that the body grow ;
The soul, aspiring to the Most High,
Demands the body seeking strength to know.
And He that forged the all-embracing chain
That binds us to him lest we fall, undone,
What we may bear of what we seek to gain
Accords in love and when the goal is won
 Of perfect peace and poised self-control,
 Lo, God himself has voice through such a soul!

PYTHONESS.

In the temple of the Sun
Pure and holy dwelleth one;
Gods have wrought to make her fair,
Lure of earth and lilt of air.

Prophetess, my heart would know
Hope of weal or doom of woe!
To what god should mortal cling?
Tribute to what altar bring?

Silent still? O mystic queen,
Tell me what thine eyes have seen!
Cleave the riddle with thy voice!
Bid me sorrow or rejoice!

Yet no answer? Sweet my heart,
Bid me not untaught depart!
Nay, repulsed I will not be!
Leaving all I cling to thee!

Past all mortal dreaming blest!
Lawless, heeding one behest!
Heritors of all that's true,—
Save to joy; what may we do?

Fellows of each wilding thing,
Through the ebb and flow of spring!
Happy in unthinking joy,
Lest the silent gods destroy!

THE BRIDE.

Ho windy gossips, in your ear!
When morning threw the casement wide
The jilted sun, with eager face,
Stole in and kissed the waking bride!

And, while she blushed, a bobolink,
That all he sees in music tells,
Rang out the tidings to the world
With tinkling chimes of elfin bells.

She rose and donned her rich attire,
The yearning bridesmaids led her down
And she was wedded in the church
Before the jostling, gaping town.

But think you that the stoled priest,
With studied pomp and sacred rite,
Hath wholly bound to one of earth
This bride of the adoring light?

The grace of the elusive streams
Is in that form his vows would bind,
For she has roamed the summer world
A free-foot follower of the wind.

And though you choired the husband's joy
And mellow chimes have pulsed it wide
The birds are singing to the flowers
That she was trothed another's bride.

CARPE DIEM.

Life to Youth is open-hearted,
Love and Truth were never parted;
Whisper not of fond deceit.
Happy hours are hours whose treasure
Prudence hath no wit to measure;
Mock her frown and pluck the sweet.

Childhood's folly youth doth nourish;
Age from free-foot youth doth flourish;
Joy can pass no open door.
Penitence is weak undoing;
Spend your strength in still pursuing,
Sorrows past will come no more.

Knowledge calls—but shun her coldly;
Wisdom wooes—embrace her boldly;
Hold and she will freely give.
This the birds in music teach you;
This the flowers in beauty preach you;
Learn their happy lore and live.

THE SALT MARSHES.

There was a light upon the sea that made
Familiar things mysterious, which to teach,
With inarticulate, alluring speech,
The living wind with lisping tongue essayed.
O'er sand and weed and spongy moss I strayed
And lifeless, orient shells, musing on each;
While casting nets with ever wider reach
A fisher plied his immemorial trade.
A sea bird winged the aerial solitude
Searching the deep for his appointed dole,
Where his wide-wandering flocks the ocean feeds;
And with the day's full orbèd strength indued,
At one with all, by all illumed, my soul
Pulsed to the rhythmus of immortal deeds.

